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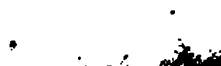
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427.

JOYCE'S  
ANALYSIS  
OF  
PALEY'S  
VIEW OF THE  
EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

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IN THREE PARTS.

PART I.—OF THE DIRECT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY,  
AND WHEREIN IT IS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE  
EVIDENCE OF OTHER MIRACLES.

PART II.—OF THE AUXILIARY EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

PART III.—A BRIEF CONSIDERATION OF SOME  
POPULAR OBJECTIONS.

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NEW EDITION, CORRECTED.

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Whence, but from *heaven*, should men unskill'd in arts,  
In different nations born, in different parts,  
Weave such agreeing truths? or how, or why,  
Should *all* conspire to cheat us with a lie?  
Unask'd their pains, ungrateful their advice,  
Starving their gains, and martyrdom their price,—DAYDEN.



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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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IN drawing up the following Analysis, the Editor had no other object in view than to obtain a more general discussion of this most important of all questions—*Is Christianity true?* For the event of the inquiry he is under no apprehension. The extensive and accurate view which Dr. PALEY has taken of its evidences merits the applause of every friend to revelation, and, it is hoped, will be the means of exciting that degree of attention, among the friends to freedom of inquiry, which the subject seems to demand.

JEREMIAH JOYCE.

*Chevening, Kent, July, 1797.*





ANALYSIS  
OF  
PALEY'S  
EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

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PREPARATORY CONSIDERATIONS.

WITHOUT attempting to prove the necessity of a revelation, it may be observed that, in judging of Christianity, the question lies between *this* religion, and none: for if Christianity be not credible, no one, with whom we have to do, will support the pretensions of any other. Suppose, then, there be a Creator, who, in his works, has consulted the happiness of his sensitive creation;—suppose a part of his creation to have received from their Maker faculties capable of rendering a moral obedience to his will;—suppose the Creator intends for these rational agents a *second* state of existence, in which their situation will be regulated by their behaviour in the *first*;—suppose the knowledge of it be conducive to the happiness of the species; under these circumstances is it impossib

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that a *revelation* should be made to acquaint them with it?

A revelation cannot be made, but by miracles; consequently, in whatever degree it is probable that a revelation should be made, in the same degree it is probable miracles should be wrought.

The attributes of the Deity, or the existence of a future state, are not *assumed*, in order to *prove* the reality of miracles. That reality must be proved by evidence. We assert only, that in miracles adduced to the support of revelation, there is not any such antecedent improbability as no testimony can surmount. In maintaining which, we contend, that the incredibility of miracles is not greater, than (1.) that a future state of existence should be destined, by God, for the human race; and, (2.) that, being so destined, he should acquaint them with it. The *proof* of these propositions is not necessary; it is sufficient that they are not so violently improbable; so contradictory to the divine power and character, that either the propositions themselves, or the facts connected with them, ought to be rejected at first sight. To this length does a modern objection to miracles go, viz., "*that no human testimony can in any case render them credible, because it is contrary to experience that a miracle should be true, but not contrary to expe-*"

rience that testimony should be false." Strictly speaking, the narrative of a fact is *then* only contrary to experience, when the fact is related to have existed at a time and place—at which time and place we, being present, did not perceive it to exist. The improbability arising from the *want* of experience, is only equal to the probability that, if the thing were true, such things would be *generally* experienced. Admitting that miracles were wrought upon the first promulgation of Christianity, it is not certain, or a probability approaching to certainty, that such miracles would become objects of *general* experience. The *force of experience* supposes the course of nature *invariable*, or its *variations general*: but the course of nature may be called the agency of an intelligent Being; and then it is not unreasonable to expect that such a Being may, upon occasions of peculiar importance, interrupt the order which he had appointed, yet, that such occasions should seldom return, and consequently be confined to the experience of a few.

It has been said, that miracles are effects without causes; as if the cure of the palsy were ascribed to the *touch*; or of blindness to the *clay*. These are merely signs to connect the miracle with its end. The effect we ascribe simply to the volition of the Deity, of whose ex-

ence and power we have previous and independent proof.

According to Mr. Hume, the question is, *whether it be more improbable that the miracle should be true, or the testimony false?* Upon this state of the controversy, suppose twelve men, whose probity and good sense I had long known, should seriously and circumstantially relate an account of a miracle, wrought before their eyes, and in which it was impossible for them to be deceived; that rather than acknowledge that there existed any imposture in the case, they should suffer themselves, when examined separately, to be racked, burnt, or strangled, and that I myself was witness to the story and sufferings; by Mr. Hume's rule I am not to believe them. Now I undertake to say, no man would disbelieve them.

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## PART I.

OF THE DIRECT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY, AND WHEREIN IT IS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE EVIDENCE ALLEGED FOR OTHER MIRACLES.

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## CHAPTER I.

**PROPOSITION I.**—*There is satisfactory evidence that many, professing to be the original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.*

To support this proposition, two points must be made out: *first*, that the founder of the institution, his associates and immediate followers, acted the part which the proposition imputes to them: *secondly*, that they did so, in attestation of the miraculous history recorded in our scriptures, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of this history. But previous to

our producing any *particular* testimony to these assertions, we observe, that the fact of the exertions and voluntary sufferings of the first Christians, is probable from the *nature of the case*.

I. The Christian religion exists, and was established. It is, therefore, probable, that its author and his disciples exerted themselves in publishing and propagating this religion;—in the prosecution of which, they, like other missionaries of a new faith, must have devoted themselves to constant and laborious preaching, and submitted to a sequestration from the pleasures of the world. In these undertakings, persons are not likely to engage, or, however, to *persist* in them, from any other motive than conviction.

II. It is probable, that the propagation of Christianity was attended with difficulty and danger.

1. As addressed to the *Jews*, it contradicted the popular expectation concerning the Messiah, and their prejudices respecting other nations: instead of exalting their nation above the rest of the world, Christianity was intended to advance those whom they despised to an equality with themselves. The Jewish religion laid great stress on ceremonies; the Christian scheme prescribed in their stead, moral rectitude and in-

ward purity:—the Jews had crucified Christ, which the preachers of his religion would represent as a cruel murder; they would also raise jealousy in the *Roman Government*, by avowing an unqualified obedience to a new master, whom they considered as the person foretold to the Jews under the title of King;—they had, likewise, to oppose a priesthood possessed of municipal authority, and were under a foreign government constantly surrounded with enemies.

2. From the *Heathen*, the preachers of Christianity had but little favour to expect. For, (1.) The Christian religion was *exclusive*; it denied the truth of every article of the heathen mythology; if it prevailed, it must be by the overthrow of all their statues and temples; it pronounced all their gods *false*, and their worship *vain*. (2.) The first Christians did not merely propose their doubts, or disbelief; but they collected proselytes, formed societies among the common people, and enjoined their followers to withdraw from the public worship of their country. (3.) This opposition would subject them to the danger of *private* enmity, even where no *public* persecution was denounced by the state; nor would they find protection in that general disbelief of the popular theology, which is then supposed to have prevailed.



since unbelievers are not usually tolerant; of which we have examples in *Pliny* and *Trajan*. Besides, religion was considered as an affair of the state;—it had the veneration of long establishment;—it was splendid and gaudy;—and upon the establishment of its rites, the prosperity of the country was supposed to depend. Neither could the Christian missionaries expect protection or impunity from the *people*, who considered all religions as equally *true*;—nor from the *philosopher*, who considered them all as equally *false*;—nor from the *magistrate*, who held them all to be equally useful.

8. The first preachers must, in consequence of their new profession, have themselves conformed to the institution they preached to others. This must have made an essential change in their habit of life, which is very difficult to effect. Men are brought almost to anything, sooner than to change their habit of life, especially when the change is attended with any considerable degree of self-denial. Hence, from the *nature and exigency of the case*, the truth of the proposition may be inferred.

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## CHAPTER II.

*Evidence of the Sufferings of the first Propagators of Christianity, from PROFANE TESTIMONY.*

TACITUS, who wrote seventy years after the death of Christ, speaking of the burning of Rome, in the reign of Nero, relates, "that this emperor, to do away the suspicions entertained against himself of having ordered the city to be set on fire, laid the guilt, and inflicted the most cruel punishments, upon a set of men called Christians. The founder of that name was Christ, who had been put to death in the reign of Tiberius. He adds, that this superstition, thus checked for a while, broke out again and spread over Judea, and through Rome, &c." The passage proves, (1.) that the founder of the institution was put to death;—(2.) that, in the same country in which he was put to death, his religion, after a short check, broke out again and spread;—(3.) that it so spread, as that, within thirty-four years after his death, a great multitude of Christians were found at Rome. Hence, the original teachers could not have been idle; nor could their exertions have been without danger. SÆTONIUS, contemporary with Tacitus, says, "the Christians, a set of men o'

new and mischievous superstition, were punished." JUVENAL probably alludes to these executions, Sat. i. v. 154. These things, it is likely, took place in the lifetime of some of the Apostles, certainly in the lifetime of some of their converts. If, then, the founder, and the first race of converts were put to death, it is hardly credible that his companions could escape in safety.

The testimony of PLINY relates (1.) to the great number of Christians of both sexes, and to the progress of Christianity, which extended to small towns, and even to the open country, as well as to cities. (2.) To their sufferings in consequence of anonymous informations *without* sovereign authority; a clear proof that the profession of Christianity was attended with danger. PLINY's account is confirmed by ADRIAN, who enjoins that, *for the future*, Christians should be *legally* brought to trial. MARTIAL's testimony proves, that the sufferings of the first Christians were *voluntary*. EPICTETUS imputes their firmness in suffering to madness or fashion; and M. AURELIUS ascribes it to obstinacy.

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## CHAPTER III.

*Indirect evidence of the sufferings of the first propagators of Christianity, from the Scriptures, and other antient writings.*

WE have four Histories of Christ;—a history taking up the narrative at his death; and a collection of letters written by principal agents, which attest the sufferings of the witnesses of the history, directly and indirectly, expressly and incidentally, by narratives of facts, and by arguments and discourses founded upon these facts.

I. These books relate that Christ was, in consequence of his undertaking, put to death at Jerusalem;—that his religion was, notwithstanding, set forth in the same city, propagated throughout Judea; and preached in other parts of the Roman Empire. These points are also fully confirmed by Tacitus. What, then, could the disciples of Christ expect for themselves, when they saw their master put to death? They could not hope to escape the dangers in which he had perished?

II. All the histories represent Christ as foretelling the persecution of his followers. See Matt. xxiv. 9. Mark iv. 17, also x. 36. Luke xxi. 18—16, also xi. 49. John xvi. 4, also xv. 20

tuallly happened.

III. These books abound with ex-  
patience, and with topics of comfort.  
See Rom. viii. 35, 37. 2  
10, 14, 16, 17. James v. 10, 11. He  
2 Thess. i. 1—5. Rom. v. 3, 4.  
13, 19. These passages would be  
meaning, unless the times called  
and constancy.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

*Direct evidence of the sufferings of the  
gators of Christianity, from the Sc  
other antient writings.*

THE scripture account of the events

persons, chosen from among his followers, who constantly attended upon him until his death, and who were commissioned by him when his own ministry was concluded, to publish his gospel, and collect disciples to it from all countries ;—that they began their work at Jerusalem, and made many converts, which alarmed the Jewish government, and two of the twelve were apprehended and imprisoned ; who, being examined and dismissed, reported what had passed to their companions, and apprized them of the dangers connected with their undertaking ;—that, in a short time after, the twelve were thrown into prison, and being punished, were suffered to depart ;—that they neither quitted Jerusalem, nor ceased from preaching, but only excluded themselves from the *temporal* affairs of the society. The people at length joined their superiors, and a *general* persecution commenced with stoning one of the community. This persecution raged with so much fury, as to drive most of the new converts from Jerusalem ; the *twelve*, however, remained in the city, and continued to correspond with, and confirm the labours of those scattered abroad. Precepts were now issued by the Jews, to persecute the *Christians* in every place where they had authority ; and one of the persons employed in this business became a proselyte to the religion which he v

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attempting to extirpate. He thus brought himself the enmity of his party, and narrowly escaped with his life. This persecution, after a short intermission, the cause of which is certainly known, was renewed under the government of Herod Agrippa, who beheaded one of the original Apostles; and attempted to put another to death, who escaped from prison. The facts are recorded with great particularity, and without any propensity to exaggerate.

Our history, leaving the other Apostles, proceeds with the memoirs of St. Paul, who, with a companion, carried the new religion through the provinces of Lesser Asia; during this whole journey, their persons were insulted, and their lives endangered. These two afterwards, owing to a dispute, set out on different routes. The history goes on with St. Paul, whose enterprises were attended with similar dangers. He crossed the Ægean Sea, taking with him our historian, and arrived at Philippi, where he was whipped and imprisoned. They then passed on to Thessalonica, where the populace were excited against them. At Berea the Jews excited such commotions among the people, as obliged the Apostle to escape to Athens. He was brought before the Roman tribunal at Corinth, whence he was dismissed, through the contempt which the multitude had for the controversies of the Jews.

of which he accounted Christianity to be one. The success of his ministry at Ephesus had nearly cost him his life. He arrived again at Corinth, whence he was driven by a conspiracy back to Philippi. At Jerusalem the populace would have killed him, had he not been rescued by an officer of the guard, who afterwards treated him with great cruelty. In his way to Rome he encountered the perils of shipwreck; nevertheless, upon his arrival, he was not deterred from preaching the new religion. The historian, in these facts, is supported by the testimony of St. Paul's own letters, which corresponds with the history, in many circumstances, relative both to his own sufferings, and those of his fellow-labourers.

CLEMENT speaks of the martyrdom of Peter, Paul, and many others. HERMAS, POLYCARP, IGNATIUS, attest the same. A circular letter from the church of Smyrna, soon after the death of Polycarp, describes the nature of a persecution in those days.

## CHAPTER V.

### *Observations on the preceding Evidence.*

I. THE scripture history, though principally confined to one Apostle, shews the nature of the service. The Apostle, in his various letters



refers to the sufferings of the others, as well as to his own. The former part of the history gives a short sketch of the seizure and imprisonment of two; afterwards of the stoning to death of Stephen, and the beheading of <sup>James</sup> John.

II. No credit, at present, is taken for the miraculous part of the history, nor for the correctness of *single passages*, but only for the *general facts*.

III. The reality of the Apostolic history is only assigning adequate causes for effects produced; and the details are perfectly agreeable to what might reasonably be expected from the nature of their undertaking, compared with the character of the age and country in which it was carried on.

IV. These records supply evidence to prove, that the primitive followers of Jesus assumed a new and peculiar course of life; and became eminent for piety, purity, and benevolence. For, (1.) the injunctions of their teachers were very strict, which, if not completely obeyed, would produce a difference in their conduct, see Acts i. 14, also ii. 46, and xii. 12. (2.) Their *new* character is perpetually referred to by the letters of their teachers. See Eph. ii. 1—3. Tit. iii. 3. 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4. 1 Cor. vi. 2. Rom. vi. 21. (3.) This agrees also with the character afterwards ~~given~~ *given* of the Christians by Pliny.

## CHAPTER VI.

*That the story, for which the first propagators of Christianity suffered, was MIRACULOUS.*

(1.) THE prevalence of the religion; (2.) The activity of the founder; (3.) The opposition which his activity excited; (4.) His fate as attested by heathen writers; (5.) The same testimony to the sufferings of the first Christians; (6.) The founder's predictions of the sufferings of his followers; (7.) Letters written by the principal agents, referring to their sufferings; (8.) A history, written by a companion of one of the new teachers;—prove, that a number of persons, at that time, advanced an extraordinary story; and for the sake of propagating it, endured persecution; and from a persuasion of its truth, entered upon a new course of life. They pretended also to have *miraculous* evidence for this story; for there could be nothing else upon which to rest their claim to attention. A Galilean peasant was announced to the world as a divine law-giver. Without some proofs of his mission, the pretension could claim no credit. It could only be supported by *miraculous* evidence, without which he could not have excited a doubt among the Jews, whether he was the *Messiah*; nor could his followers, without

appeal to such a token, have had any ground to stand upon, in attempting to propagate his religion. That the story was *miraculous*, may also be inferred from the powers laid claim to by Christians in succeeding ages.

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## CHAPTER VII.

*That it was, in the main, the story which we have now, is proved by indirect consideration.*

I. THERE exists no trace or vestige of any other story. The remote and incidental notices of Christianity, which are found in the *heathen writers*, are, that it originated with Jesus, who was afterwards crucified at Jerusalem, and that it was propagated into distant countries. The *manners* of the Christians they likewise describe, in terms conformable with the accounts of our books.

The *Jewish writers* of that period advance no other history of the transaction, than that which we acknowledge. Josephus mentions John the Baptist with circumstances agreeing with the Christian story. In another passage, the authenticity of which is controverted, he speaks of Jesus as the Messiah. This passage was *genuine*, or the silence of the historian was *designed*; if *designed*, it may be imputed to the

difficulty which he found in representing the business ; on a similar account the principal circumstance in the life of Constantine was omitted by Eusebius.

II. The whole series of Christian writers, from the first age of the institution down to the present, proceed upon the general story which our scriptures contain.

The *letters* of the Apostles transmit, incidentally, the principal circumstances of the history. Barnabas relates the sufferings of Christ, the choice of his Apostles, and refers to his miracles. By Clement we have the resurrection of Christ recorded, and the mission of his Apostles. Polycarp recognises the virtues and sufferings of Christ ; and is said to have received accounts of his miracles from eye-witnesses. Ignatius frequently alludes to the history of Christ ; and Quadratus to his works. From the writings of Justin Martyr, a life of Christ, agreeing with our scriptures, might be collected. After this time, the history, as given by the Evangelists, occurs in antient Christian writings, as familiarly as in modern sermons.

III. The religious rites of the early Christians sprung out of the narrative now in our hands.

*In our account* Christ directs his disciples to be baptized : the first Christians were baptiz

He directs them to hold religious assemblies: they did hold religious assemblies. *Our* accounts make the Apostles assemble on a stated day in the week: during the first century, stated days for assembling were observed. *Our* histories record the institution of the Lord's supper: the early Christians universally celebrated it. These rites were observed in Christian societies of different nations and languages.

IV. *Our* account bears proof that it is an account of facts known and believed at the time; therefore the gospels were not the *cause* of the Christian history, but the consequence of belief in it. This is expressly declared by Luke in his preface. See Luke i. 1—4. It is also inferred from St. John's gospel, as the historian refers to facts which he does not relate; an instance of this kind is the *ascension*, which is not mentioned in this place, but is referred to, chap. vi. 62, and xx. 17. Hence the notoriety of the ascension among those who were likely to read his book. The general notoriety of the story is intimated by the manner in which the narrative is introduced: chap. i. 15, "John bare witness, &c." supposes, that the reader knew who John was. The reference to John's imprisonment, chap. iii. 24, could only come from a writer who supposed the fact well known.

## CHAPTER VII.

*The same proved from the authority of our Historical Scriptures.*

BEFORE this proof is stated, it must be premised,—

I. That if any one of the four Gospels be proved genuine, this is sufficient to establish the identity of the history.

The received author of the first was an original apostle;—of the second, an attendant upon one of the apostles;—of the third, the companion of the most active teacher of this religion;—of the fourth, an apostle. They all lived at the time, and on the spot, and give *circumstantial* accounts of the miracles. If the Gospels of Matthew and John proceeded from them, they must be true in substance or wilful falsehoods. If false, the authors were villains, without the prospect of advantage.

At present we only assert, that what the Gospels contain is the same as what the Apostles preached. How stands the proof? A set of men published a miraculous story, upon the strength of which they called upon mankind to embrace new rules of action; and in attestation of which they voluntarily exposed themselves to dangers. The particulars of this story,

were attributed to Jesus : if the Gos-  
alone were genuine, we have the san-  
evidence. If both these were spurious,  
the gospel of Luke, or Mark, were  
the person whose name it bears, or by  
person in the same situation, we still  
account of a contemporary and asso-  
Apostles, which authority seems sufficient.  
The question is simply what it was then  
advanced. Since the New Testament  
our *distinct* histories, the genuineness  
one of which is perfectly sufficient,  
is at least entitled to the advantage of so  
*its probabilities*. But if it should appear  
the Evangelists had seen each other's  
say, perhaps, subtract from their cha-  
acter testimonies *strictly* independent ; but

he had diligently investigated the subject. The Gospel by St. John is admitted as *independent* testimony; therefore, if any *one* of the four be *genuine*, we have in *that one* strong reason to believe, that we possess the accounts which the original propagators of the religion delivered.

II. The *aggregate* authority of the Scriptures is to be considered.

In the evangelic history there is an accumulation of testimony which hardly belongs to any other. Each gospel is a confirmation of the others; the existence of four separate histories is a proof that the subject had a foundation, and the facts common to all may be considered as fixed in credit and publicity. The "Acts of the Apostles," as a supplement to these histories, establish the account; and the various *epistles* written by the principal agents in the business, and upon the business, support the conclusion. The New Testament is often considered as *one book*, as *single evidence*, and its different parts not as *distinct* attestations, which the *discrepancies* among the several documents prove they were. The histories were probably not immediately written, but were the productions of emergency, either to instruct the converts, or to prevent the circulation of erroneous narratives.

III. The *genuineness* of the historical books



written by some of the early disciples, and *received* by the societies of the Apostles, as containing authentic facts upon which the religion of the Christian world would be a valid proof. The books must have accorded with what the Apostles taught. Their *early existence* and *authenticity* are made out by ancient testimony; but the gospels fix the time and situation of the authors; and the third purports to have been written by the author of the "Acts," who declares himself to have been the companion of the original preachers of the Gospel.

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## CHAPTER IX.

*Of the authenticity of the Historical Scriptures.*

prove, that the scriptures were not of modern contrivance, and were long ago much read and sought after.

II. The language of the New Testament is suited to the age, and the situation of the Apostles. It is Greek coming from Hebrew origin, and abounds with Hebrew and Syriac idioms.

III. The miraculous relations contained in these books do not directly affect the question of their genuineness. The works of Bede exhibit many wonderful relations, yet no one doubts whether they were written by him.

IV. Had it been easy to have forged the Christian writings, it is probable that some would have appeared under the sanction of the name of Christ himself; as in the unsuccessful attempt at the epistle of Christ to Abgarus, which was not mentioned by any writer during the three first centuries.

V. If the ascription of the gospels to their respective authors had been conjectural, they would have been ascribed to more eminent men.

VI. Christian writers and churches soon agreed on this subject. The diversity of opinion in other points, and concurrence in this, seem to suppose it to have been the result of private and free inquiry.

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tament are quoted, or assumed by  
Christian writers, proceeding in regu-  
lar succession from the time of the Apostles to  
the present.

THE medium of proof, in this propo-  
sition, is unquestionable. Bishop Burnet, in  
his history, inserts extracts from Lord Clarendon.  
One such insertion proves, that Claren-  
don's story was extant when the bishop's  
history had been read and received by  
the public.

#### TESTIMONIES.

I. In the epistle ascribed to Barnabas,  
this passage; "Let us beware  
of us, as it is written, 'there are  
few chosen.'" Hence we infer, that  
this is a book extant

a contemporary of St. Paul, in which the *words of Christ*, as recorded by the evangelists, are quoted with great respect and veneration, and without any doubt whether they were the real words of Christ.

*Objection.* As Clement hath *not* used words of quotation, it is not certain that he refers to any book whatever.—*Answer.* (1.) He, without any reference, uses a passage *manifestly taken* from the Epistle to the Romans. (2.) There are many sentences of St. Paul to the Corinthians standing in Clement's epistle, without any sign of quotation. (3.) This method of adopting words of scripture, without acknowledgment, was in general use. But, admitting that Clement had these words from the apostles, or first teachers of Christianity, still the scriptures contain what the apostles taught.

III. At the conclusion of the Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul says, "Salute Hermas," &c. Probably the author of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, in which are striking allusions to the gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John.

IV. Ignatius became Bishop of Antioch thirty-seven years after Christ's ascension; in his epistles are undoubtedly allusions to the gospels of Matthew and John, but not marked as quotations.

V. Polycarp, who had been taught by the apostles, and conversed with many who

seen Christ, has nearly forty allusions to the New Testament in one short epistle ; several of them quoted, without hesitation, as the words of Christ.

VI. Papias, a hearer of John, ascribes the respective gospels to Matthew and Mark, mentions the materials from which Mark collected his account, and in what language Matthew wrote. Hence it is certain that these books, at that time, bore these names.

VII. Justin Martyr, who came twenty years after, has several distinct and copious extracts from the gospels and Acts. In all his works there are but two instances in which he refers to anything, as said or done by Christ, which is not related in our gospels. All his references suppose the books notorious, and that there were no other accounts of Christ received and credited.

VIII. Hegesippus, who came thirty years after Justin, says that, in his journey from Palestine to Rome, "in every city the same doctrine was taught, which the law, and the prophets, and the Lord teacheth."

IX. About the year 170, the churches of Lyons and Vienne sent an account of their sufferings to Asia. Pothinus, their bishop, being *at that time ninety years old*, his early life must *have joined on with the times of the apostles.*

In this epistle there are exact references to the gospels of Luke and John, and to the Acts of the Apostles.

X. Irenæus, successor to Pothinus, gives positive testimony to the books of the New Testament. He asserts that the story which the gospels exhibit, is the story which the apostles told; and that the gospels were written "*as the foundation and pillar of our faith*;" he then describes the authors, and the origin of their histories. By another passage it appears, that, in his time, there were *four*, and *only four*, gospels; which by his references were those which we have: his testimony to the Acts is generally explicit.

REMARK. The testimony of these persons is the concurring testimony of writers who lived in countries remote from one another. Clement flourished at Rome; Ignatius at Antioch; Polycarp at Smyrna; Justin Martyr in Syria; and Irenæus in France.

XI. In the works of Athenagoras are clear references to Mark and Luke. And in those of Theophilus evident allusions to Matthew and John. Clement of Alexandria, who followed Irenæus, at the distance of sixteen years, gives *an account* of the order in which the four gospels were written, mentions the names of their

respective authors, and ascribes the *Acts* to St. Luke.

XII. Tertullian joins on with Clement, who says, "among the *Apostles*, John and Matthew *teach* the faith; among *apostolical men*, Luke and Mark *refresh* it." Hence the number of the gospels, and the names of the evangelists. He affords also a complete attestation to the authority of *our* books, by enumerating the churches which received them: the Acts of the Apostles he calls Luke's Commentary.

XIII. During an interval of thirty years, we have the fragments of several writers, in all of which there is some reference to the gospels; and in Hippolytus, there is an abstract of the gospel history. Afterwards we come to Origen, whose declaration is peremptory; he says, "the four gospels are received, without dispute, by the whole church of God under heaven:" he subjoins also a history of the respective authors, and censures the Apocryphal gospel.

XIV. Gregory and Dionysius were scholars of Origen; their testimony is but a repetition of his. In the writings of Cyprian, who flourished twenty years after Origen, there are copious citations from the scriptures.

XV. *In the next forty years, the remains of a crowd of writers are to be met with, in which*

the historical scriptures are always cited with profound respect. The testimony of Victorin is positive.

XVI. Arnobius and Lactantius, about the year 300, in defending Christianity, derive their arguments from our gospel.

XVII. Eusebius, who flourished about the year 315, composed a history of Christianity, in which he gives quotations from each evangelist, and makes remarks upon their writings. From this time the works of Christian writers are full of references to the New Testament.

SECTION II.—*The Scriptures are quoted with peculiar respect, as books possessing an authority belonging to no others, and as conclusive in all matters of controversy.*

#### TESTIMONIES.

- (1.) THEOPHILUS, Bishop of Antioch, speaking of the prophets and *gospels*, says, *all* being inspired, spoke by one and the same spirit of God.
- (2.) A writer, about one hundred and fifty-eight years after the publication of the scriptures, calls them *divine*.
- (3.) Hippolytus, in quoting the books of the New Testament, professes "to draw out of the *sacred fountain*."
- (4.) Our assertions, saith Origen, are unworthy of credit; we must receive the scriptures as witnesses.
- 5.) Cyprian exhorts the Christian teachers



vine. (8.) The Arians rejected certain scriptures, because they were not in scripture; them says to Augustine, "if you take anything from the *divine scriptures*, I will not follow you." And Athanasius calls the scriptures *the scriptures of salvation*. (9.) Cyril says, "the faith, not the least article ought to be preserved without the *divine scriptures*." Irenæus, Phæbadius, Basil, Ephraim, and many others all testify to the same purport.

SECTION III.—*The Scriptures were, in some times, collected into a distinct volume.*

.) THE term *gospel* is probably used thus for a collection of writings, as the *prophets*. Clement of Alexandria

there was *then* a collection of writings called the *New Testament*. (5.) Clement's testimony has been mentioned. (6.) Tertullian divides the Christian scriptures into the *gospels* and *apostles*, and calls the whole volume the *New Testament*. (7.) The same division is referred to by many writers of the third century. (8.) Eusebius took some pains to shew that John's gospel had been *justly* placed *fourth* in order. Hence the four gospels had been collected.

SECTION IV.—*Our Scriptures were soon distinguished by appropriate titles of respect.*

POLYCARP calls them the *holy scriptures*;—Justin Martyr, the *gospels*;—Dionysius, the *scriptures of the Lord*;—Irenæus styles them the *divine scriptures, divine oracles*;—Matthew's gospel is called by Theophilus "*the evangelic voice*;"—Clement styles the *New Testament* "*the divinely-inspired scriptures*;"—Origen speaks of the "*Old and New scriptures*;"—by Cyprian they are called the *books of the spirit*. Hence the peculiar respect paid to the scriptures.

SECTION V.—*Our Scriptures were used in the public religious assemblies of the early Christians.*

(1.) JUSTIN, speaking of the Christian worship, says, "*the memoirs of the Apostles*

read," &c., which elsewhere he calls the gospels. (2.) Tertullian, on the same subject, says, we come together "*to recollect the divine scriptures.*" (3.) At Palestine, Origen was desired to expound the scriptures *publicly*. (4.) Cyprian says, "*the gospel of Christ should be read in the church.*" (5.) Augustine mentions the reading of the scriptures as the *advantage* of the Christian religion.

SECTION VI.—*Commentaries were anciently written upon the Scriptures ; harmonies formed out of them ; copies collated, and versions made into different languages.*

(1.) TATIAN, about the year 170, composed a harmony of the gospels, entitled "*of the four.*" (2.) and (3.) Pantænus and Clement wrote explanations of the Old and New Testament. (4.) Tertullian appeals from a later version to the authentic Greek. (5.) An anonymous author appeals to the *antient copies* of the scriptures. (6.) Eusebius refers to several writers as the *interpreters* of the scriptures. (7.) Julius Africanus wrote upon the genealogies in Matthew and Luke. Ammonius composed a harmony of *the four gospels* ; and Origen wrote commentaries on *most of the books* in the New Testament. (8.) Dionysius harmonized the accounts

of the resurrection. Lucius and Hesychius put forth *editions* of the New Testament. (9.) The fourth century supplies fourteen writers on the books of the New Testament. At the beginning of this century, Eusebius wrote upon the *discrepancies* of the gospels. Damasus corresponded with Jerome on the difficult passages of scripture. Gregory of Nyssen undertook to reconcile the accounts of the resurrection. Numerous other commentators succeeded. A Syriac version is now extant, which, as Syriac was the language of Palestine, when Christianity was first established, is probably very antient: it wants the 2d of Peter, 2d and 3d of John, and the book of Revelation; in other respects it differs little from our text.

SECTION VII.—*The Scriptures were received, and appealed to by different Sects of Christians.*

(1.) BASILIDES, who lived about the year 120, rejected the Jewish institution, and oppose the general doctrine of the Christian church; yet admitted the gospel by Matthew. (2.) The Valentinians, about the same time, appealed to the *evangelic* and *apostolic* writings. (3.) The Carpocratians are charged with perverting a *passage* in Matthew, which proves that they *received* that gospel. Several other sects of her

tics, between the years 150 and 200, admitted the scriptures of the New Testament. (5.) Tatian, a founder of a sect, made a harmony of the gospels. (6.) Those who contended for the mere *humanity* of Christ, argued from the scriptures. (7.) The *advocates* and *adversaries* of Origen's opinions acknowledged the authority of the scriptures. (8.) Paul of Samosata is not charged with rejecting any book of the New Testament. (9.) The Sabellians, in an opposite extreme to Paul, received *all* the scriptures. (10.) The testimony of a bishop of Carthage is, that the heretics who *pervert the scriptures* ought to be execrated. (11.) The Millennium, &c., divided the opinions of Christians, yet every one appealed to the scriptures. (12.) The Donatists used the same scriptures as we do. (13.) In the Arian controversy, *both sides* appealed to the same scriptures. (14.) The Priscillianists and Pelagians received our scriptures. (15.) The testimony of Chrysostom is, "that though many heresies have arisen, yet all have received the gospels, either entire or in part." Marcion rejected the Old Testament, and every passage in the New which recognized the Jewish scriptures; but he published a chastised edition of *St. Luke's* gospel.

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SECTION VIII.—*The four Gospels, the Acts, thirteen Epistles of St. Paul, the 1st of John, and the 1st of Peter, were received by those who doubted concerning other parts of our canon.*

(1.) JEROME relates, that the Epistle to the Hebrews was not received as St. Paul's by the Romans. (2.) Origen speaks doubtfully of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the 2d of Peter, and the 2d and 3d of John, and then he quotes those parts which were undoubted. (3.) Dionysius has his doubts concerning the book of the Revelation, but entertains no suspicion of the authenticity of the four gospels. (4.) Eusebius treats of the scriptures which are *universally acknowledged*, and of those which are *not so*. Among the *former* he ranks the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles of St. Paul, the 1st of John, and the 1st of Peter. This opinion appears to have been founded upon the testimony of writers whom Eusebius and his contemporaries called *Antients*.

SECTION IX.—*Our historical Scriptures were considered, by the early adversaries of Christianity, as containing the Accounts upon which the religion was founded.*

(1.) CELSUS, in the second century, writing against Christianity, alludes to books writ

by the disciples of Jesus. He accuses the Christians of *altering the gospel*, which refers to some variations; but *various readings* do not occur in *modern* publications; he says, his arguments were from *their own writings*, evidently referring to the gospels. Gelsus refers to no *spurious* gospels. (2.) Porphyry, in the third century, gave a large treatise against Christianity. He thought, by overthrowing the Gospels and the Acts, that he should overthrow the religion itself. Speaking of Matthew, he calls him *your* evangelist. (3.) Julian, in the fourth century, mentions Matthew and Luke by name;—recites the sayings of Christ in the very words of the Evangelists;—states the early dates of these records;—and calls them by the names they now bear, without questioning their genuineness.

SECTION X.—*Formal Catalogues of authentic Scriptures were published, in all which our present Sacred Histories were included.*

ENUMERATIONS of this kind are given by Origen, Athanasius, and Cyril. In the latter the book of Revelation is omitted, as it is also in an *authoritative catalogue* of canonical scriptures delivered by the council of Laodicea. Other *catalogues* are given by other writers about the

same period, in which no books are admitted besides those which we now receive.

SECTION XI.—*The above Propositions cannot be predicated of the Apocryphal Books of the New Testament.*

(1.) No Christian History, besides our Gospels and the Acts, claiming to be written by an *Apostle*, or *Apostolic Man*, is quoted within three hundred years after the birth of Christ. An Hebrew Gospel may seem to form an exception; it is *once* mentioned by Clement, and *twice* by Origen, with marks of discredit. (2.) Of apocryphal writings only *two* are mentioned in the three first centuries, without express terms of condemnation. We may also add, (1.) That there is no evidence that any *apocryphal books* existed in the first century, in which century *all our* historical books are proved to have been extant. (2.) These apocryphal writings were *not* read in the churches. (3.) Were not admitted into their volume. (4.) They do not appear in their catalogues. (5.) Were not noticed by their adversaries. (6.) Nor referred to by different parties. (7.) They were not the *subjects* of commentaries, &c. (8.) And they were rejected by Christian writers in succeeding *ages*. But all these books go upon the s



fundamental history of Christ, as that of our Scriptures ; they are not contradictions, but unauthorized additions to our histories.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### RECAPITULATION.

**THERE** are two points which form the subject of our discussion.

*First*, The founder of Christianity, his associates, and followers, passed their lives in labours and sufferings.

*Secondly*, They did so in attestation of the miraculous history recorded in our scriptures.

The *former* is rendered highly probable, from the nature of the undertaking ;—the characters employed ;—the opposition of their tenets to the doctrine of the country ;—their condemnation of all other religions ;—and their want of authority. The probability is increased by the fate of the founder and the first converts, attested by heathen writers ; and is advanced to *historical* certainty by the evidence of our own books.

That it was *for* a miraculous story is manifest ; because the designation of Jesus, as *Messiah*, could have nothing but miracles to stand on. That the exertions of the apostles were

for the story which we have *now*, is proved by the story being transmitted to us by *two* of their own number, and by *two* others personally connected with them; therefore, if any one of these accounts be genuine it is sufficient; and their genuineness is made out by the general arguments which evince the genuineness of other antient writings; viz., by the citations from them in writings belonging to a period contiguous to that in which they were published;—by the regard paid to them by the early Christians;—by an universal agreement with respect to these books;—by contending sects appealing to them; and by a *defect* of this evidence to other histories on the same subject.

But the *strict* genuineness of these books is *not*, perhaps, necessary to the support of the proposition. If we did *not* know who were the authors of the four gospels;—yet, if they were received as authentic accounts at or near the time of the apostles;—if they corroborated each other's testimony;—if they are corroborated by a contemporary history;—confirmed by the Epistles from the Apostles; and this connected with the reflection, that if the apostles delivered any other story it is lost; it is sufficient to *prove*, that this is the story told by the apostles, for which they acted and suffered. If it be so the religion must be true. These men cov

had no knowledge, when they were a  
consequences would be danger and death

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PROPOSITION II.—*That there is NOT satisfactory evidence, that persons pretending to be the original witnesses of any other similar miracles have acted in the same manner, in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of these accounts.*

IN comparing our evidence with that of our adversaries, the distinctions are of two kinds; those which relate to *proofs*, and those which relate to *miracles*. Under the former head, we may lay out *of the case*,—

I. Such accounts of supernatural events as are found *only* in histories by some ages posterior to the transaction. *Ours* is contemporary history. This difference removes the miraculous history of Pythagoras; the prodigies of Livy's history; the fables of heroic ages; the Greek, Roman, and Gothic Mythology; and the legendary history of Popish saints. It applies to the miracles of Apollonius Tyaneus; and to some of the third century.

II. Accounts published in one country of what happened in a distant country. In the case of *Christianity*, the story was published in the plac

in which it was acted. This distinction disposes of the miracles of Apollonius Tyaneus, said to have been performed in India; those of Francis Xavier, and many others.

III. We may lay out of the case *transient* rumours. Future confirmation, permanency, increasing in notoriety, and subsequent independent accounts, are principles which must distinguish solid truth from fugitive lies.

IV. *Naked* history may be laid out of the case. If we had no visible effects connected with the history, no subsequent or collateral testimony to confirm it, it would not be deserving of credit. This is not our case. The books are combined with the institution; with the religion of *this* day; with the time and place of its origin; and with the circumstances of its rise and progress.

V. A mark of historical truth is *particularity* in names, dates, places, &c.; such is the description of St. Paul's voyage and shipwreck; the cure and examination of the blind man in John's gospel; and many other examples in the four gospels.

VI. We may lay out of the case stories upon *which nothing depends*; in which no interest is *involved*; and *nothing* to be done or changed in *consequence* of believing them. Nothing *depends upon the truth or falsehood* of most vulgar

errors and popular superstitions. But the miracles of Christ claimed to regulate the opinions of mankind, and to decide the most important question that can agitate the human mind. It did not stop at *opinions*, but they who believed Christianity *acted* upon it.

VII. We have laid out of the case accounts which merely come in *affirmance* of opinions already formed. Popish miracles happen in popish countries, and make no converts. They, like other arguments, *confirm* what was believed before. Men are easily fortified in their old opinions, driven *from* them with difficulty. The Christian miracles were wrought in the midst of enemies; they made converts, who gave up to the testimony their most favourite prejudices. There was no *anterior* persuasion to lay hold of. The miracles of Jesus gave birth to the sect. Frauds might mix themselves with the *progress*, but could not take place in the *commencement* of the religion.

*Of the distinctions which relate to the miracles themselves, the following should be carefully retained:—*

I. *It is not necessary to admit as a miracle what can be resolved into a false perception. Of this nature was the demon of Socrates, the v*

the restoration of the blind to sight, of a dead man to life, leaves an abiding effect. A miracle may be sudden, but the proof remains. There are others of a *mixed* nature, in which the *principal* miracle is momentary, but the circumstance combined with it is permanent. Peter's vision preparatory to the call of Cornelius. The *vision* might be a dream, the *conversion* by Cornelius could not. Either, taken separately, might be a delusion ; the concurrence of the two was impossible without a supernatural cause.

II. It is not necessary to bring into comparison *tentative* miracles ; i. e., where, on a great number of trials, some succeed. The same observation applies to ancient oracles ; to the answers wrought by relics at the tombs of saints :

tion applies to all narratives of cures in nervous complaints, and of all diseases affected by the imagination.

IV. To the same head of objection may be referred *stories* which can be resolved into exaggeration. The miracles of the gospel cannot be explained away in this manner. The feeding five thousand with a few loaves and fishes surpasses all bounds of exaggeration. The raising of Lazarus from the dead comes not within the compass of misrepresentation. Removing from the comparison the cases fairly disposed of by these observations, many will not remain. To those which do remain, we apply this distinction: "That there is not satisfactory evidence that persons pretending to be original witnesses of the miracles passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undertaken and undergone, in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and properly in consequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts."

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## CHAPTER II.

*Consideration of some specific Instances related by  
Mr. Hume.*

*I. THE cure of the blind and lame man at Alexandria, by Vespasian, as related by Tacitus*



have conceived an account under the  
of having been concerted between the  
the physician, and the emperor ; it was  
lated to confer honour upon the emp  
the god Serapis ; it was achieved in t  
of the emperor's followers and flatter  
in a city devoted to his interest and the  
God.

II. The restoration of the limb of an  
ant in the Spanish church, as told by  
de Retz ; but it appears that the Card  
not believe the story ; he seems not to ha  
mined into the fact ; and it is easy to  
that such a story, managed by the prie  
backed by their authority, would obtai  
with the ignorant populace.

III. The miracles said to have been  
at the tomb of the Abbé Denis. The

—And the circumstances which indicate this explication, in the case of the Parisian miracles, are (1.) These miracles were *tentative* ; out of many thousands, the history contains but *nine* cures. (2.) The convulsions at the tomb are admitted. (3.) The diseases chiefly depended upon inaction and obstruction. (4.) The cures were gradual. (5.) They were incomplete. (6.) Others were temporary : and some of the cases do not require this solution.—The cause *for* which these miracles were wrought did not rise, but sink. In none of these instances was the miracle unequivocal ; by none were established prejudices overthrown : of none of them did the credit make its way in opposition to authority and power ; and by none of them were many induced to a life of labour and sufferings.

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## PART II,

## OF THE AUXILIARY EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

## CHAPTER I.

PROPHECY. Isaiah lii. 13. liii. These words are extant in a book, purporting to contain the predictions of a writer who lived seven centuries before the Christian era. It is certain that they were either written or spoken before the fact took place to which they are applied. The quotation is from a writing *declaredly prophetic*; professing to describe such future changes in the world as were connected with the fate and interests of the Jewish nation. It is intermixed with no other subject. Its application to the evangelic history is plain and appropriate. The *antient* Rabbins explained it of their expected Messiah, but the *modern* expositors refer it to the calamitous state of the Jewish nation. The description in the seventh verse, "he was oppressed, yet he opened not his mouth, &c." answers to no part of the Jewish history. The mention of the *Grave*, and the *Tomb*, is not

. Another argument is founded upon our Lord's prediction concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, recorded by *three* of the evangelists Luke xxi. 5—25. Matt. xxiv. and Mark xiii. These passages are direct and explicit predictions. The general agreement of the *descriptions* with the *event* has been shewn by many writers. The only question is, whether the prophecy was delivered *before* the event. And, (1.) The judgment of antiquity *concurs* in assigning the three gospels a date prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. (2.) The evangelists who wrote them must have been far advanced in life when Jerusalem was taken, and no reason has been given why they should defer writing their histories so long. (3.) Had the event been accomplished when the predictions were recorded, it would proba-

## CHAPTER II.

*The Morality of the Gospel.*

Two points are to be conceded. *First*, that the teaching of morality was not the primary design of Christ's mission, but the establishing a *proof* of a future state. *Secondly*, that morality, being the result of the experience of the effects produced by certain actions, cannot be a subject of *discovery*. Still the morality of the gospel is extraordinary, considering from whom it came.

The subject divides itself into *things taught*, and the *manner* of teaching,

I. The gospel *omits* some qualities which have usually engaged the admiration of mankind, such as friendship, patriotism, and active courage.

II. It has brought forward some virtues, commonly overlooked and contemned ;—as passive courage, patience under injuries, &c. The characters which possess the *former* qualities have ever been the favourites of mankind : with Christ, those who possessed the *latter* were subjects of commendation. (1.) If the *latter* disposition were *universal*, the world would be a society of friends. If the *former*, it would produce a scene of universal confusion. (2.)

to the *heroic* character is peculiar to tian institution.

II. A second argument, drawn from rality of the New Testament, is the s upon the regulation of the thoughts. sideration is connected with the ot related to the *malicious*, *this* to the passions. Together they comprehend whole character. A moral system which prohibits *actions*, but not *thoughts*, must be factual.

III. By the Christian system we are to refer our actions to the will of the and constantly to have in view the happiness of those about us. The *first* direction is to the motive which acts steadily and uniformly. The *second*, all selfishness in the human

We next consider the *manner* of our Saviour's teaching.

His lessons did not consist of disquisitions. His precepts were not accompanied with *proofs* or *arguments*; but were sententious, and suited to the character he assumed as a messenger from God. His teaching aimed at *impression*. *Conviction* was to arise from a respect to his authority. This mode of instruction was the most proper, considering the shortness of his ministry, and the difficulties attending it. By this mode of instruction, *rules* are conceived in general terms; the application is left to the reason of the hearer. A *specific* compliance with the precepts would be of little value; the *disposition* which they inculcate is of the highest.

*Objection.* But this disposition is unattainable.—*Answer.* So is all perfection. Should imperfection, therefore, be recommended? Our Saviour's rules can never be so mistaken as to do harm. The parables of the New Testament would do honour to any book. The Lord's prayer is without an equal or a rival. Whence had this man this wisdom?

The *negative* character of our Lord's discourses deserves to be considered. (1.) They exhibit *no particular* description of the invisible world; *this repels* the suspicion of enthusiasm. The teacher, whose principal purpose is to draw a



tention to *himself*, is full of it ; witness the Koran. (2.) Our Lord enjoined no austerities. (3.) He uttered no impassioned devotion. The Lord's prayer is a model of calm devotion. His words in the garden are unaffected expressions of deep, but sober piety. (4.) He does not substitute fervency in the place of regular morality. (5.) He did not fall in with the fashions of his country, or the natural bias of his own education. (6.) In our Saviour's apothegms, there is no example of sophistry and false subtilty. (7.) The national temper of the Jews was narrow-minded : the lessons of Jesus enforce the most enlarged benevolence. (8.) His religion was abstracted from all views of ecclesiastical or civil policy. Christianity declines all questions upon government ; it is applicable to all forms ; as it tends to make men virtuous ;—as it states obedience to government, in *ordinary cases*, to be a duty of conscience ;—as it induces a spirit favourable to public tranquillity ;—and as it inculcates prayer for communities, and their governors, of all denominations. A religion, with such qualities, would have been thought extraordinary coming from any person ; exceedingly so from him from whom it did come. Suppose the mission to be real, all is accounted for. But without reality it is very difficult to explain. Christ was not like any other ca

penter; the apostles were not like any other fishermen.

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The *character of Christ* is part of the morality of the gospel. (1.) He is charged with no vice by friends or enemies. Some stain or other attaches to almost all other teachers of morals. (2.) In every narrative of Jesus, we perceive traces of devotion, humility, patience, &c., which qualities are to be collected from incidents. His *devoutness*, from his frequent retirement to solitary prayer;—his *humility*, from his endeavours to check contentions among his disciples for superiority;—his *benignity*, from his kindness to children, from the tears which he shed over his country, and upon the death of his friend, &c.; his *mildness*, in his rebuke to his disciples at the Samaritan village, and in his prayer for his enemies;—his *prudence*, in his conduct upon trifling questions. The best descriptions of virtue are to be found in the New Testament. The whole volume is replete with piety, and with devotional virtues, which were scarcely known to heathen moralists.

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## CHAPTER III.

*The candour of the Writers of the New Testament.*

THIS candour consists in noticing many circumstances which no writer *would* have forged, or would have inserted, had he thought himself at liberty to *mould* the particulars of that story according to his choice. For example, (1.) Relating unanimously, that Christ's appearances after his resurrection, were to his disciples *alone* and not attempting to conceal this, at first sight unfavourable circumstance. (2.) John the Baptist's message, stating his doubts concerning the character of Christ, must have afforded handle to cavil and objection. The same observation holds concerning the apostasy of Judas. John vi. 66. "*From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.*" Was it the part of a writer who dealt in disguise to put down this anecdote? or this—"He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." See also Matt. v. 17, 18. Acts xxv. 19, and Acts viii. 14. Lastly, where do we find less disposition to magnify, than where Paul is said to have preached from morning to night; *and adds, and some believed the things spoken, and some believed not?* Matt. xxi. 21. *carried with it a difficulty, which no writer would ha*

brought upon himself officially. The answer of Christ to him who wished first to go and bury his father, though very *expressive* of the importance of religion, was harsh, repulsive, and such as would not have been *made* for Christ. The answer to Mary, "*Touch me not,*" &c., probably referred to a former conversation, for want of knowing which, the meaning is hidden from us; the obscurity is a proof of genuineness. John vi. labours under obscurity, which renders it unlikely to have been fabricated. The account of the institution of the Eucharist bears internal marks of genuineness; had it been feigned, it would have been more full and formal. The writers of the gospel discover no deceit or cunning; use no precaution to obviate objections; they appear to tell the truth, and attend to nothing else. Add also the *extreme naturalness* of some things related in the New Testament. Mark ix. 24. The struggle in the father's breast between solicitude for his child and an involuntary distrust in the power of Christ, is expressed with an air of reality which could hardly be *counterfeited*. Matt. xxi. 9. The eagerness of the people to introduce Christ into Jerusalem; and their demand, in a short time after, to crucify him, represents popular favour, and agrees with nature and experience. The rulers rejecting Christ, while many of the common people

received him, was the *natural* effect of prejudice. The conversation of our Lord with the Samaritan woman at the well was of the same kind. See several other instances.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### *Identity of Christ's Character.*

THIS argument applies principally to the comparison of the three first Gospels with that of John. John wrote after the other Evangelists, and supplies omissions in their narratives; but in relating different actions and discourses, preserves a similarity of manner which indicates that the actions and discourses proceed from the same person.

I. This agreement is most strong in our Saviour's mode of teaching; and in that property of it which consists in his drawing of the doctrine from the occasion, or raising reflection from the objects and incidents before him. [The author here points out this manner in the three first evangelists, and shews its agreement with the examples of Christ's discourses preserved by John. These examples cannot be abridged; the reader must, therefore, be referred to the book itself.] There is nothing of this manner perceptible in the speeches recorded in the

nor in any other, but those which are attributed to Christ.

II. There seems an *affinity* between the history of Christ's placing the little child in the midst of his disciples, in the *three* Evangelists, and the history of Christ's washing the feet of his disciples, recorded by John.

III. The phrase, "*the Son of Man*," is found, as applied by Christ to himself, in *all* the Gospels, but is never used *of him* by any other person.

IV. Christ is represented by the different historians as *withdrawing* himself out of the way whenever the multitude indicated a disposition to tumult. See Matt. xiv. 22. Luke v. 15, 16, with which compare John v. 13, and vi. 15.

V. The reserve, which for some time Christ used in announcing his own character, is recorded by all the Evangelists. Matt. xvi. 20. Mark iii. 4. Luke iv. 41, and John xxiv. 35.

VI. The difficulty which the disciples had in understanding Christ when he spoke of his passion and resurrection, and their anxiety in desiring an explanation, are noticed in Luke ix. 45. Mark ix. 32, and in John xvi. 16, &c.

VII. Our Lord's meekness during his last sufferings, which is conspicuous in the *three first evangelists*, is preserved by John and *separate* examples. John xviii. 20, is very

milar to Mark xiv. 48. Luke xxii. 52. In both there is the same tranquillity, and the same reference to his public teaching. Matthew and Mark make the charge upon which our Lord was condemned, to be a threat of destroying the temple; but they do *not* say upon what circumstance this calumny was founded. John, in the early part of his history, supplies the defect. See Mark xiv. 5, and John ii. 19. The appointment of the twelve apostles is mentioned by the three first evangelists, who have given their names. John, through his whole narrative, *supposes* Christ to be accompanied by twelve disciples; and whenever he notices any one of them, it is one included in the catalogue of the other evangelists. All this bespeaks reality.

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## CHAPTER V.

### *Originality of our Saviour's Character.*

THE Jews were expecting a person who should advance their nation to independence and prosperity. Had Jesus been an *enthusiast*, he would have fallen in with the popular delusion. Had he been an *impostor*, he would have flattered the *prevailing hopes*. All the pretended Messiahs *did so*, of whom Josephus mentions many. A ~~the~~ *mission*, the operation of which was to tak

place in another life, was a thing *unthought of* as a subject of these prophecies. Hence Jesus came in a character inconsistent with enthusiasm and imposture, both of which have ever *followed* prevailing opinions.

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## CHAPTER VI.

*Conformity of facts mentioned or referred to in Scripture, with the state of things in those times, as represented by foreign and independent accounts.*

If this conformity be made out, it proves that the writers possessed a species of knowledge which could only belong to an inhabitant of that country, and to one living in that age. Hence the genuineness of their writings.

The authors by their situation must have *known* the facts which they relate;—the argument is stronger from the *mixed* nature of the allusions in this book;—the scene of action is displayed in the greatest cities of the Roman empire; allusions are made to the manners and principles of the Greeks, Romans, and the Jews, which renders forgery very difficult. A Greek or a Roman, in the second or third century, would have been wanting in Jew

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### ANALYSIS OF PALEY'S

a Jewish convert would have been the knowledge of Greece and Rome. argument, depending entirely upon an of particulars, the author has collected a great variety of examples, which he has digested and contracted, as to render any bridgement of them unintelligible, the must therefore consult the examples  
ves.]

result of the detail is, that (1.) these elements appear, not only in articles of public y, but in minute and peculiar circumstances. (2.) The destruction of Jerusalem produced such a change in the state of the country, a writer who was unacquainted with the circumstances of the nation before that event, would find it difficult to avoid mistakes in endeavouring to give detailed accounts of transactions connected with those circumstances. 3.) There appears, in the writers of the New Testament, a knowledge of the affairs of those times, which we do not find in authors of later ages.

There have, however, been some difficulties started; and it has been objected, (1.) That the taxing during which Jesus was born, "was first made whilst Cyrenius was governor of Syria Luke ii. 2. Now Cyrenius was not governor of Syria until ten years after the birth of C

and a taxing *was* made in the beginning of his government.

*Answer.* The sentence in Luke may be translated, "*this was the first assessment of Cyrenius, governor of Syria;*" the words *governor of Syria* being used after the name of Cyrenius as his title; and this title belonging to him at the time of *writing the account* was naturally subjoined to his name, although acquired *after* the transaction which the account describes.

*Objection II.* Luke in his 3d chapter says—  
"Now in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar, Jesus began to be about thirty years of age."  
At this period, according to Josephus, he must have been at least thirty-one, perhaps thirty-three years old.—*Answer.* This difficulty is solved by attending to the Greek, which signifies, "that he was *about thirty* years of age," and the adverb *about* gives all the latitude that is wanted.

*Objection III.* Acts v. 36—"For about these days rose up one Theudas," &c. Josephus's account of Theudas referred to a transaction seven years *after* Gamaliel's speech, of which this text is a part.—*Answer.* There might be two impostors of the same name; for there were four persons of the name of Simon within forty years, and three of Judas within ten years, who were all leaders of insurrection.

*Objection* IV. Matt. xxiii. 34. "Unto the blood of *Zacharias son of Barachias*, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar." There is a *Zacharias*, whose death is related in the 2d book of *Chronicles*, which supports the allusion; but he was the son of *Jehoiada*. There is also *Zacharias* the prophet, who was son to *Barachia*, but of whose death we have no account.—*Answer*. The first *Zacharias* was probably the person, and the name of the father has been added since by some transcriber, who took it from the title of the prophecy.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### *Undesigned Coincidences.*

BETWEEN the letters of *St. Paul* and the history of the *Acts of the Apostles*, there exist many notes of *undesigned* correspondency; a perusal of which is sufficient to prove, that neither the history was taken from the letters, nor the letters from the history; and the coincidences are too close and numerous to be accounted for by the accidental concurrences of fiction. [In support of this argument, *Mr. Paley* refers to his *Horæ Paulinæ*, and shews how it bears upon the general question of the Christian history.]

*I. St. Paul*, in these letters, affirms his own

performance of miracles; and that miracles were the signs of an Apostle.

II. It shews that the series of action represented by St. Paul was real, which proves, that the original witnesses of the Christian history devoted themselves to lives of toil and suffering in consequence of the truth of that history.

III. It proves that the author of the "Acts" was well acquainted with St. Paul's history, and a companion of his travels, which establishes the credit of Luke's gospel. The similitude between John's gospel and the first Epistle of St. John is remarkable; it is also valuable, as the Epistle asserts the writer's personal knowledge of Christ's history. Chap. i. 1—3.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### *Of the History of the Resurrection.*

THE strength of this part of the evidence of Christianity does not arise from its being a more decisive proof of supernatural agency than other miracles, but from the certainty we have, that the apostles and first teachers *asserted* the fact; which would have been known if the gospels *had never been written*. Every piece of scripture recognizes the resurrection. Every writer

from that time to the present, *for or against* Christianity, speaks of this article as received *without doubt* by all Christians.

*Question.* Did the Apostles knowingly publish a falsehood, or were they themselves deceived? The *first* is generally given up; the nature of the undertaking, and of the men, exempt their memory from the suspicion of imposture. The solution more deserving of notice, is that which would resolve the conduct of the Apostles into *enthusiasm*; and would class the resurrection with stories of apparitions. This comparison will not stand; for Christ was seen by *many* persons, separately, and together; by day as well as by night; who conversed and ate with him, and who examined his person.

*Objection I.* But these accounts are upon the credit of *our* records.

*Answer.* The resurrection was asserted; it was therefore incumbent on the enemy to have produced the dead body.

*Objection II.* The disciples had stolen the body.

*Answer.* This supposes *fraud*. Besides, it is loaded with improbabilities; such as the situation and fears of the disciples; the impossibility of *succeeding* in such an attempt, both from the *guard set over* the tomb, and from the *likeness of the night*, it being the time of

moon; and the inevitable consequences of detection\*.

It is evident also, that, if the body had been stolen, the Jews would have produced it, as the completest answer to the story of the resurrection.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### SECTION I.—*The Propagation of Christianity.*

WE are to consider in *what degree*, within *what time*, and to *what extent*, Christianity was actually propagated.

A few days after the ascension, about one hundred and twenty disciples met together, probably persons connected with the apostles, and with one another. (Acts i. 5.) It does not appear that they were aware that a new religion was to be established. On the day of Pentecost

\* It has also been rightly observed by Dr. Townsend, that the story of the guards carried collusion upon the face of it:—" *His disciples came by night, and stole him away, while we slept.*" Men in such circumstances would not have made such an acknowledgment without previous assurances of protection and impunity.

—" Especially at the full moon, the city full of people, many probably passing the whole night, as Jesus and his disciples had done, in the open air, the sepulchre so near the city as to be enclosed within the walls."—*PRIESTLEY on the Resur.*

three thousand were added to the society, (A ii. 41.) many of whom probably had before been believers in Christ, and now openly avow their attachment to his cause. In the fourth chapter it is said, their numbers were five thousand; and in the next we read that believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. The sixth chapter speaks of the disciples being greatly multiplied in Jerusalem, and that a great company of priests were obedient to the faith. It appears, further, that the preaching of Christianity was *confined* for more than a year to the city of Jerusalem.

A persecution dispersed the converts throughout Judea and Samaria; and during this second period of four years, Christianity was propagated among Jews, Jewish proselytes, and Samaritans. The apostles did not know that they were at liberty to propose the religion to mankind at large, until it was revealed to Peter by a miracle. The third period commences, about seven years after Christ's ascension, with the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles of Caesarea; and before the close of this period, within thirty years after the death of Christ, the religion had spread itself through almost all the *districts of Asia Minor*, through Greece and the *Islands of the Ægean Sea*, the sea-coast of *Africa*, and had extended to Rome; Jerusa-

continuing the centre of the mission. Hence — the following observations. (1.) The account comes from a person who was concerned in a portion of what he relates, and was contemporary with the whole of it. (2.) The account is an incomplete account of the propagating of Christianity; therefore, if what we read in the history be true, much more than what the history contains must be true also. (3.) That the account is, for this reason, more credible. Had it been the author's design to have *displayed* the early progress of Christianity, he would have collected accounts of the other apostles. (4.) The intimations of the number of converts, and the success of the apostle's preaching, come out, for the most part, *incidentally*; which removes the suspicion of a design to exaggerate or deceive. The account is confirmed by *parallel testimonies* in the letters of the apostles; those of St. Paul are addressed to the churches of Corinth, Philippi, &c., at which place his *ministry* is recorded.

It is now to be considered, how far these accounts are confirmed by *other* evidence.

Tacitus speaks of a vast multitude of Christians at Rome in the tenth year of Nero. Pliny's letters to Trajan, written not quite eighty years *after the* ascension, prove that the Christians in *Pontus* and Bithynia were very numerous, and



had subsisted there some considerable time: now there is *no* evidence that Christians were more numerous in those places than in other parts of the Roman empire; hence the *truth* of the representations given of the general state of Christianity in the world by Christian writers. Justin Martyr, who wrote thirty years after Pliny, says, there is not a nation, either Greek or Barbarian, amongst whom prayers are not offered to the Father by the name of Jesus. The rapid and general diffusion of Christianity is noticed by succeeding writers to the time of Constantine, who probably declared himself on the side of the Christians, because they were the powerful party. Jerome, in the year 392, reckons up one hundred and twenty *Christian writers*.

## SECTION II.—*Reflections on the preceding Account.*

IN viewing the progress of Christianity, our first attention is due to the number of converts at Jerusalem, after the founder's death; then, to attend to the establishment of Christian societies in Judea and Galilee; afterwards, to recollect the success of the apostles in their *travels*;—finally, to consider the subsequent *spread* of the religion. In all these stages the *history* is without a parallel, inasmuch as it was

the prevalency of a doctrine depending on a matter of fact, in opposition to the prejudices of education, fashion, and worldly policy.

If the widely disproportionate effects which attend the preaching of *modern* missionaries of Christianity, in comparison with what followed the ministry of Christ and his apostles, under circumstances either alike, or not so unlike as to account for the difference, be duly considered, it will appear reasonable to conclude, that they possessed means of conviction which we have not; that they had proofs to appeal to which we want.

### SECTION III.—*Of the Religion of Mahomet.*

MAHOMETANISM resembles Christianity in the rapidity of its progress, the recency of its history, and the *prophetic* character assumed by its author. But there are points of difference which separate the two cases entirely.

I. Mahomet did not found his pretensions upon miracles, *capable of being known and attested by others*; he expressly disclaims the power. Hence no credit is due to the miraculous stories related of Mahomet by Abulfeda, who wrote the account 600 years after his death; or which are found in the legend of Al Janabi, who can 200 years later. Admitting the whole of

homet's authentic history, as far as was witnessed by others, to be true, he might still be an impostor, or enthusiast, or an union of both: but admit almost any part of Christ's public history to be true, and he must have come from God.

*Objection.* If one religion could make its way without miracles, why might not another?

*Answer.* This is not the question. The proper question is, whether a religion, founding itself on miracles, could succeed without any reality to rest on? As Mahomet did not take this course, it may be presumed very difficult, if not impossible. He knew the importance of miracles by incessantly referring to those of preceding prophets.

II. The establishment of Mahomet's religion was affected by causes which in no degree appertained to the origin of Christianity.

During the first *ten* years, when Mahomet used only persuasion, and confined his exertions to Mecca, it appears that he could reckon upon no more converts than eighty-three men and eighteen women, yet this progress was aided by the following important advantages: 1. He was the grandson of the most honourable and powerful family in Mecca. 2. He conducted his design with great art and prudence. 3. The Arabs probably acknowledged one supreme deity, which,

at first, was the leading doctrine of Mahomet.

4. Mahomet seems to have had these two purposes in view, *to make converts, and those converts soldiers*, as the following particulars will shew.

(1.) He assures the Jews, Christians, and Arabs, that *his* religion had been originally their own.

(2.) He never ceased from describing the future anguish of unbelievers. (3.) His voluptuous paradise.

(4.) The highest heavens for those who fought his battles, or expended their fortune in his cause. (5.) He applied the doctrine of predestination to fortify the courage of his adherents.

(6.) He allowed a plurality of wives, in compliance with the climate of the country.

When Mahomet was received into the city of Medina, he changed his conduct, pretending that he had received a commission to *destroy* infidels, and to set up the true faith by the *sword*. An early victory over a very superior force established his renown; we have, therefore, from this time, nothing left to account for, but that he should be able to collect an army, and that his army should conquer.

The success of Mahometanism during this and every future period cannot be stated in prejudice of the Christian argument; nor does it stand in the way of this important conclusion, *that the propagation of Christianity, in the man-*

ligion of the world.

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## PART III.

A BRIEF CONSIDERATION OF SOME POPULAR  
OBJECTIONS.

## CHAPTER I.

*The Discrepancies between the several Gospels.*

A STORY should not be rejected by reason of some *diversity* of circumstances with which it is related; for the character of human testimony is, substantial truth under circumstantial variety; but a close agreement induces suspicion of confederacy and fraud. Important variations, and even *contradictions*, are not always deemed sufficient to shake the credibility of the fact. The embassy of the Jews to Claudian, Philo places in *harvest*, Josephus in *seed-time*. Lord Clarendon states, that the Marquis of Argyle was condemned to be *hanged*, which was performed on the *same day*. Four other historians say that he was *beheaded* upon the *Monday*, having been condemned on the *Saturday*. This *contradiction* never led a person to doubt whether the Marquis was executed or not. Dr. Milner

## CHAPTER III.

*The Connexion of Christianity with the Jewish History.*

CHRIST assumes the *divine* origin of the Mosaic institution, and recognises the *prophetic* character of many of the ancient Jewish writers.

Thus far we are bound to go ; but we are not to make Christianity answerable for the circumstantial truth of each separate passage in the Old Testament. In our Saviour's time, the books were universally read by the Jews ; he and his apostles used them, and referred to them. Yet except where he expressly ascribes a divine authority to particular predictions, we cannot, strictly, draw any conclusions from the books being so used.

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CHAPTER IV.*Rejection of Christianity.*

It is acknowledged, that the Christian religion did not produce an universal, or even a general conviction, in the minds of men of the age and country in which it appeared ; and this has been called the *rejection* of the Christian history and *miracles*. This objection divides itself into two *parts*.

*I. As to the Jews.* With us there is but one

question; were the miracles really wrought? Admitting this, we acknowledge the whole. This does not appear to have been the case with the Jews. John vii. 21—31, exhibits the reasoning of different sorts of persons, upon the occasion of a real miracle. The account of Lazarus's resurrection is observable for the same purpose. The spectators did *not* perceive that the works of Jesus bore witness to the truth of his pretensions.

In the ninth chapter of John's gospel we have a full account of the cure of the blind man—a miracle submitted to all the scrutiny which a sceptic could propose; yet the *rulers* rejected its force; but on the mind of the man restored, it had its proper and natural operation.

*Question.* How could such a turn of thought obtain with the antient Jews?

*Answer.* (1.) Their expectation of a Messiah was of a nature totally different from what the appearance of Jesus bespoke him to be. (2.) Their persuasion of the agency of demons in the production of supernatural effects. The *first* would put them to seeking for an excuse why they should not receive Jesus in the character he claimed. The *other* supplied such an excuse. Let Christ work his miracles, the answer was ready, he wrought them by the assistance of demons.

II. The infidelity of the Gentile world is



resolved into the contempt they had for Christianity prior to examination.

The state of religion among the Greeks and Romans had a tendency to induce this disposition: Christianity had nothing to attract their notice; it mixed with no politics; it produced no fine writers; the nature, office, and ministry of Jesus would be alien to their conceptions. Its connexion with Judaism would injure it with the learned Heathen, who regarded *Jehovah* himself as the *idol* of the Jewish nation; and this would preclude all *inquiry* among men of education, which accounts also for their *silence* on the subject. In this manner Christianity was treated by Pliny the younger, and by Tacitus. Without inquiry, Tacitus disposes of the whole question, by calling it a "*pernicious superstition*," a proof how little he knew or concerned himself about the matter. Read the instructions of Paul to the Roman converts, ch. xii. 9.—xiii. 13, and then judge of this *pernicious superstition*. Or take Pliny's description of the conduct and principles of this sect, and then call Christianity a *pernicious superstition*.

Upon the words of Tacitus we may build these observations. (1.) The learned men of *that age beheld* Christianity in a distant and *obscure view*. (2.) But little reliance can be *placed upon the most acute judgments in subjects which they are pleased to despise*. Ha

not Christianity survived to tell its own story, it must have gone down to posterity as a "*pernicious superstition*." (3.) This contempt prior to examination is an intellectual vice, from which the greatest faculties of mind are not free. (4.) We need not be surprised that many writers of that age did *not* mention Christianity, when those who *did* appear to have misconceived its nature and character.

The Heathen public were probably divided into two classes; those who despised Christianity beforehand, and those who received it. Therefore the writers would be, those who were silent about Christianity, and those who were Christians. The notion of *magic* was resorted to by the *heathen* adversaries, as that of *diabolical* agency was by the Jews.

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## CHAPTER V.

*That the Christian miracles are not recited, or appealed to, by early Christian writers themselves, so fully or frequently as might have been expected.*

I. THIS objection applies to the letters of the Apostles, which are either *hortatory*, or *argumentative*. In the *former* there appears no place for more references than we find;—the nature of the *argumentative* epistles accounts for the infrequency of the allusions. They were

written to prove the truth of Christianity, but to shew its *design* and *effects*; and of those effects the value and extent. Miraculous evidence must be the *ground* of all the epistles. The *apostolic epistles* resemble the *apostolic speeches*. Peter, in six speeches, refers but *twice* to the miracles of Christ, and *once* to the miraculous powers which he himself possessed. Stephen's long speech contains no reference to miracles. St. Paul, before Festus, appeals to Christ's resurrection, and his own conversion, to which there are references in his epistles, and *three* indubitable references to the miracles which he himself wrought. Hence the agreement between his speeches and letters.

The *miraculous* history was presupposed, and therefore the point which occupied the writer's thoughts was this; *allowing* the history to be true, ought Jesus to be received as the *Messiah*; if so, what was the object and benefit of his mission.

II. The same observations will apply to the writings of the *Fathers*; the subject of which they treated did not lead them to any direct recital of the Christian history. The next class of writers is that of the *Apologists*, the avowed *defenders of Christianity*. Quadratus, the most *antient*, appealed to the miracles of Christ, in *terms as express as we could desire*. Justin *tartyr* asserts the performance of miracles b

Christ, in words as strong as language will admit; and also assigns the reason why he had recourse to the argument from *prophecy*, rather than from *miracles*; viz., that his opponents would ascribe the latter to magic. Irenæus and Lactantius notice the same evasion in the adversaries of Christianity. Similar observations may be made respecting Tertullian, Origen, and Jerome, which prove that the miracles of Christ were appealed to, in their literal sense, by the early *Apologists* for Christianity, which is an answer to the objection.

## CHAPTER VI.

*Want of Universality in the Knowledge and Reception of Christianity, and of greater Clearness in the evidence.*

**OBJECTION.** If revelation came from God, no part of the human species would remain ignorant of it; no understanding could fail of being convinced by it.

**Answer.** The advocates of Christianity do not pretend that their religion possesses these qualities, nor do they deny it to have been within the compass of divine power to have communicated to the world a stronger and more extensive influence. The not having more evidence is not, however, a sufficient reason,

rejecting that which we have. : If this dispensation labour under no defects but what are common to others, we are not justified in rejecting it. Throughout *nature*, which is a system of beneficence, we are seldom able to make out a system of *optimism*. To inquire what the Deity *might* have done, is a mode of reasoning which will *not* do in *natural history*, nor in *natural religion*, and therefore cannot, with safety, be applied to *revelation*. The general character of the works of nature is, on the one hand, goodness in design and effect, and on the other, liability to difficulty and objections. Christianity participates in the same character; nevertheless the real system in both cases may be a system of strict optimism, although the proof be hidden from us. If Christianity be compared with the state and progress of natural religion, the objector will gain nothing by the comparison. *Natural religion* is not universal: the existence of the Deity is not known to all, but it cannot be argued, that therefore he does not exist. If Christianity be regarded as an instrument for the melioration of mankind, its progress resembles that of other causes by which human life is improved; it has put things into a *train*; it may become universal; and the world may continue in that state so long, as that its duration may bear a vast proportion to the time of its continuance. Besides,—

1. *Irresistible evidence* would restrain the voluntary powers too much, to answer the purpose of trial or probation.

2. It would leave no place for the admission of *internal* evidence, which applies itself to the knowledge, love, and practice of virtue, and which operates in proportion to the degree of those qualities which it finds in the person whom it addresses.

3. It may be questioned, whether the perfect display of a future state would not make a degree of impression upon the mind incompatible with the duties of life.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### *The supposed Effects of Christianity.*

It has been contended, that Christianity has had a bad effect upon public happiness.

I. The influence of religion is sought in a wrong place. It is not to be looked for in the councils of princes; in the resolutions of popular assemblies; in the conduct of governments towards their subjects, of sovereigns to one another, of conquerors at the head of armies; topics which fill the page of history: but it must be perceived in the silent course of private life. *The substance of religion is necessarily invisible. Much of the influence of Christianity may be felt in times of public distress. The Christi*

religion *acts* upon public usages and institutions, respecting war, government, marriage, public amusements, and the state of the poor.

But the argument depended on is, the benefit of religion in *private* stations. It has been the author of virtue and happiness to millions; it hath had a *sensible* influence on the public judgment of morals; hence many may be kept in order by Christianity who are *not* Christians. But it is not to be appreciated by its *temporal effects*; its influence upon the *whole* of human existence must be estimated.

II. Christianity is charged with many consequences for which it is not answerable.

Religion has *not* made persecuting laws; it is answerable for no part of the mischiefs of persecution. Had there been in the New Testament what there are in the Koran, precepts authorising *coercion* in the propagation of religion, the case would have been different. If Christianity be charged with every mischief o which it has been the *occasion*, though not th *motive*; the answer is, that if malevolent passions be there, the world will never want occasions.

## CHAP. VIII.

### THE CONCLUSION.

*In religion much depends on the order of inquiries. He who takes up a system o*

nity, believing *every part* must be true, or the *whole* false, approaches the discussion with great disadvantage. Under this prejudice we are all, in some measure, introduced to our religious studies; the *doctrines* of religion come to us before the *proofs*, hence persons of hasty tempers have rejected the whole. We ought first to examine the general truth of its principles, and then inquire into its doctrines. What is clear in Christianity is sufficiently valuable; what is dubious—unnecessary, and of subordinate importance.

The truth of Christianity depends upon its leading facts, and upon them alone. Of these we have sufficient evidence. We have uncontested and incontestable points to which the history of the human species hath nothing similar to offer. A Jewish peasant, without force or influence, changed the religion of the world. After he had been put to death, his companions asserted his supernatural character, founded on supernatural operations, and in testimony of these assertions they suffered persecution and death. A very few days after this person had been publicly executed, and in the very city in which he was buried, these his companions declare, with one voice, that his body was restored to life; in this fact they persisted, in the face of those who had killed him, and who were armed with the whole power of the coun-



As to these facts, the Christian story hath never varied; nor has any other ever been set up in its room. All sects, in all ages, have *concurred* in representing these facts in this manner.

These propositions prove the existence of the transaction. The particulars we have from the persons themselves, and their companions, in *four* books, the authenticity of which is established by stronger proofs than belong to almost any other antient book. They also bear strong *internal* evidence of their truth, inasmuch as the writers understood the history and usages of the times to which they refer. In comparing them with one another, we find them varying, so as to repel suspicion of *confederacy*, and so agreeing under this variety, as to shew they had one real transaction for their common foundation.

The four narratives are confined to the history of the founder, and end with *his* ministry. The story is carried on by a person connected with the business, and the substance is *confirmed* by a number of *original letters*, written by a person who is the principal subject of the history.

The miracles were not *secret*, nor *momentary*, nor *tentative*, nor *ambiguous*, nor performed under the sanction of *authority*, with the spectators *on their side*, nor in affirmance of tenets already established. The evidence of these miracles *was* contemporary;—published on the spot;—involved questions of the greatest mag

nitude ;—contradicted fixed prejudices ;—and it required from those who accepted it, principles and conduct exposed to outrage and persecution.

The event, as might be expected, was *noticed* in the prophetic writings of the Jews ; had the consequences been more distinctly revealed, it would have cooled their ardour for an institution, which was eventually to give place to one more perfect.

The great importance of revelation is to be estimated from the *doctrine* of a resurrection from the dead ; the other articles of the Christian faith are but adjuncts to this ; its *morality* is wise and pure, neither adapted to vulgar prejudices, nor flattering popular notions, nor excusing established practices, but calculated to promote human happiness.

The Deity, to *fix* the institution, vouchsafed a miraculous attestation ; he then committed its future progress to the natural means of human communication. In this, Christianity is analogous to most other provisions for human happiness. The provision is made, and left to act according to the laws of a more general system.

Let the constant recurrence to our observation of contrivance, design, and wisdom in the works of nature, fix upon our minds the belief of a God, and all is easy. In the counsels of such a being it is not improbable that there should be a future state, or that we should

acquainted with it. A future state rectifies everything; because if moral agents be eventually happy or miserable, according to the conduct, in the stations assigned them here, seems not very material by what rules the stations are assigned; it therefore solves objections to the divine goodness. Nevertheless, a higher degree of assurance was necessary than that drawn from the light of nature, to overcome the shock which the senses receive at the appearances of death. Abstractedly considered, perhaps, there is no more difficulty apprehending the resurrection of a dead man than the conception of a child.

Since, however, a future state, and the revelation of a future state, are not only perfectly consistent with the attributes of God, but also remove many difficulties;—since there is such a strong body of historical evidence that such a revelation has been communicated, we may set our minds at rest with the assurance, that in the resources of *creative* wisdom, expedients can be wanted to carry into effect what the Deity hath proposed.

THE END.

